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RECENT CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT OF LONDON

The system of municipal government of the greatest city in the world is a mystery to most of its inhabitants. It is as complex as the net-work of its streets, and, like them, it is largely the result of the accidents of time and circumstance, perpetuated by the Englishman's instinctive regard for the survivals of antiquity. It is only within the last fifty years—and, to a great extent, within the last fifteen—that the legislature has taken the matter in hand and has attempted to introduce into it anything like systematic uniformity.

The area of London is one hundred and twenty-one square miles. Its limits are the same as those constituted by the Metropolis Management Act of 1859, with the addition of Penge, which was added thereto only two years ago. Its ratable value, or the amount which a rate of twenty pence in the pound would produce, is about forty million pounds sterling. Its population reaches the prodigious figure of some six and a half millions, or considerably more than that of the whole of Scotland, Ireland, or Canada. Its municipal debt in 1901 was over fifty-four millions of pounds, and is constantly increasing.

By reason of its paramount importance, London has from the earliest times been placed upon a different footing from the other towns of the Kingdom. Their government is more or less uniform, being regulated for the most part by the Municipal Corporations Acts of 1835 and 1882. These Acts do not apply to the metropolis, which has been left to the mercy of piecemeal legislation;¹ so that if at the present day a code were to be produced of the existing law of London government, it would be a patch-work of some hundreds of public and private acts of Parliament and charters. It is not surprising that this task has not been attempted. There are still at the present day some three hundred public authorities in London, though the London Government Act of 1899 alone abolished about two hundred bodies with a membership of five thousand persons. Between these authorities the superintendence and administration of municipal affairs is distributed. The division is not a logical or even

¹ London has its special Act (known as Michael Angelo Taylor's Act) providing for lighting paving, and street improvements; it has its own Public Health Acts, its own Building Acts, and its own assessment system.

a convenient one; a certain amount of jealousy and friction, too, exists between some of them. It is due, undoubtedly to the common sense and moderation of the members and the London electorate generally, that, in spite of this cumbrous machinery, London is governed in a manner which compares not unfavorably with other great municipalities.

There are three organizations in London which stand out as pre-eminently the most important and influential; two of them are of modern creation and are adaptations of older institutions. They are the London County Council and the various Metropolitan Borough Councils. The third, on the other hand, is one of the most ancient of all corporations, the city of London.

The London County Council is the successor of the Metropolitan Board of Works. The latter was the outcome of the report of a royal commission appointed in 1853. That body issued a recommendation in favor of the formation of seven separate municipalities in London under a central board of works. The second part of this suggestion alone was carried out, and a bill was introduced in the session of 1855 by Sir Benjamin Hall, which became law under the title of the *Metropolis Local Management Act, 1855*.

The Metropolitan Board of Works was the first authority which in any way linked together the distinct components of the area of London. It was accorded powers with reference to the control of main-drainage, the carrying out of improvement works, the regulation of streets and bridges, and the management of the fire brigade. But its constitution was inherently vicious. Its forty-six members were not directly elected, but were chosen by the voice of the vestries and the district boards into which London was then divided. It proved quite incompetent to carry out the important duties intrusted to it. It was discredited on all sides, and the revelation of certain cases of corruption among its members brought matters to a climax. A royal commission was appointed to inquire into the subject, and reported that the board was not worth reforming. Shortly afterwards a bill was introduced into Parliament by the Right Honorable C. T. Ritchie, and was passed under the name of the *Local Government Act, 1888*. This enactment strengthened local government over the rest of England by the establishment of the County Councils, the modern equivalent for the ancient "shire moots." The bill also provided that the powers and authorities of the Metropolitan

Board of Works should be handed over to a new body called the London County Council, which was put on a footing analogous to that of the other County Councils. The area of London was formed into an administrative county, while the metropolis outside the city and the city itself are each counties for non-administrative or judicial purposes, possessing their own Courts of Quarter Sessions and their own justices.

The London County Council first met on March 21, 1889, under the chairmanship of Lord Rosebery.² It consists of a chairman, a vice-chairman, one hundred and eighteen councillors, and nineteen aldermen. Two women were originally elected, but they were unseated upon a petition to the Queen's Bench Division. The councillors are chosen by direct election, four for the city of London and two for each of the Parliamentary divisions of the rest of the London area. They are elected for a term of three years and retire together. The next election is in March of this year. The aldermen are elected by the councillors, but not necessarily out of their own body. They hold office for six years, and nine or ten retire every three years. The chairman is elected by the rest of the Council and serves for a year. The Council holds its meetings every Tuesday.

Very important powers are possessed by this body. The Act of 1888 intrusted to it not only the ordinary duties of a county council, exercising the administrative powers till then performed by the justices in Quarter Sessions, but those also which were formerly exercised by the Metropolitan Board of Works, and also various other duties of a special character. The Council has the power of raising and lending money and of sanctioning loans required by the metropolitan boroughs. The total advances which they have made amount to nearly £35,000,000. They have to attend to the main drainage of London and also to supervise the laying of local sewers. The Metropolitan Fire Brigade is entirely under their control. The police, however, are independent of them and are under the direct government of the Home Office, except in the city, which possesses its own police force. The Council had the power, which it has not exercised, of taking over the control of the main roads in the county. The only roads vested in or managed by it are the Thames Embankment and certain other roads which have been the subject of special

² The first vice-chairman was Sir John Lubbock, now Lord Avebury.

Improvement Acts. The public bridges over the Thames are vested in and maintainable by it. It controls and supervises the making of new streets and their naming and numbering. It is an authority (and until the London Government Act, 1899, the only authority) for enforcing the execution of the London Building Act, 1894, which provided, among other matters, that no new buildings should be erected of a greater height than the extent of the roadway intervening between them and the opposite houses, and for the leaving of sufficient space in the rear of new dwelling-houses. These duties the Council carries out by its superintending architect and district surveyors. It has powers of supervision also over the erection of dangerous structures, over offensive businesses, and over the structural arrangements of theatres, music-halls, and artisans' dwellings; it is the licensing authority for all theatres and places for public music and dancing not under the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain; it has powers of management over parks and open spaces; it is the authority for testing the supply of gas and water; it authorizes the laying of electric mains and cables, and maintains the necessary testing-stations; it provides asylums for pauper lunatics and reformatories and industrial schools; it appoints and pays the different coroners. There are a multitude of other duties as well which devolve upon it.

Most of the Council's work is done by its committees, of which there are twenty-eight. Among them may be mentioned the Asylums Committee, the Housing of the Working Classes Committee, the Highways Committee, and the Bridges Committee. In 1893 a Works Committee was started for the employment of direct labor. This is not the place to discuss the merits or demerits of that system. Suffice it to say that the tendency in the Council has been constantly to increase its sphere and to do without the contractor whenever an opportunity presents itself. In the year ending 31 March, 1903, over £350,000 was spent by this committee. The Council is also the tramway authority for London, and has been active in purchasing the tramway systems in the metropolis. The fifty miles of tramway line which it possesses in the north it has leased to the North Metropolitan Tramways Company until 1910. The southern portion, to the extent of some forty miles, it works itself. The latter is being changed to electric power, and the conduit or underground system is being introduced thereon. Where the Council

has taken over the management of tramways, the result has been beneficial in several respects. The employees have received better wages; fares generally have been reduced. Workmen have been carried at specially reduced rates, and an all-night service has been inaugurated. An attempt was made by the Council to run a service of omnibuses between their tramway termini, but the House of Lords decided in 1902 that this business was illegal, for, being a statutory corporation, the Council's powers were limited to those which Parliament had expressly bestowed upon it.

The most important committee of the Council is undoubtedly the Finance Committee. No liability of over fifty pounds is allowed to be incurred by the Council except after an estimate has been submitted by the Finance Committee and a resolution passed thereon. All payments require an order of the Council signed by three members of the Finance Committee and countersigned by the clerk. The Council obtains every year, by its Annual Money Act, the power of spending capital and of raising money through the creation of Consolidated Stock. The total debt of the Council is £57,500,000, but deducting £24,000,000 due from the Borough Councils and other authorities and £4,000,000 representing the value of property held, the net debt is about £29,000,000. The rate collected in the county outside the city was for the year 1903-04, 16¾*d.* in the pound; for the city it was 14⅛*d.* The Council was enabled in 1894 to levy half-yearly an equalization rate of 3*d.* in the pound for distribution among the parishes of London, according to their population, the result being to benefit the poorer districts at the expense of the richer. The estimated expenditure for the year 1903-04 was £7,875,090, and the amount of the loans to be advanced to different authorities was £4,749,000, making a total of over twelve and a half millions. The Council's accounts are audited by the Local Government Board.

Several important works are in course of construction by the Council, under powers obtained by special acts of Parliament. One is the driving of a broad thoroughfare from the Strand to Holborn, for which purpose a vast quantity of buildings are in the course of demolition; the cost will be about five million pounds. Under the roadway a shallow electric tramway will be run to connect at Theobald's Road with the Council's northern line of tramways. Another improvement is the continuation of the Victoria Embankment from

the Houses of Parliament to Millbank, and the clearing away of an eyesore of wharves, slums, and ill-constructed alleys, which have made that portion of the Thames such a contrast to the Seine at Paris.

The present chairman of the London County Council is Lord Monkswell. At the election of Councillors in 1901, eighty-four Progressives were returned, thirty-one Conservatives, and three Independents. The influence of the Progressives is to be traced in the establishment of the Works Department and in the regard paid to trades union conditions and hours of labor.

For some years after its creation the Council was the object of a good deal of jealousy and some fear by the local authorities of the metropolis, who were apprehensive that it would pursue an aggressive policy against them. Moreover, a good deal of the odium attaching to its predecessor clung to the new body. But in course of time the Council has lived down these feelings, and it is generally regarded as possessing in its members a very high command of ability and energy, and as comparing in these respects by no means unfavorably even with the House of Commons.

Such, then, is the central body of London government. The early history of the metropolis, however, is that of the city corporation. The city has an area of just over a square mile. Its ratable value is about five millions. Enormous as its day population is, its sleeping population is insignificant, and consists almost entirely of caretakers and charwomen. The government of the city is as complicated as that of the rest of London. It possesses some one hundred and twenty charters and fifty general acts of Parliament. It is governed by its Common Council, consisting of the Lord Mayor, twenty-five aldermen, and two hundred and six commoners of the city of London. The city, as has already been observed, has its own body of police. For some purposes the County Council has no jurisdiction within the city; for instance, with respect to the execution of the London Building Act or the erection of sky-signs. On the other hand, the city has certain powers over the whole of London, as, for example, with regard to markets and the inspection of animals imported from abroad.

Beyond the city, until 1855 the unit of government was the parish. The parish was governed by a common-law vestry or general meeting of the inhabitants, which controlled ecclesiastical as

well as civic affairs. The incumbent and church wardens were *ex-officio* members, and the former presided. In addition, certain bodies of commissioners were from time to time created over various areas to deal with different needs as they arose. The Metropolis Management Act, under which the Metropolitan Board of Works was created, gave the parishes a more crystallized form. It set up elective vestries everywhere in place of the common-law vestries. In the larger parishes it intrusted these bodies with powers of municipal government analogous to those possessed by the municipalities of provincial towns. The government of the smaller and more thinly populated parishes was grouped into districts administered by a board of works appointed by the different elective vestries in the areas composing them. Upon the new vestries and district boards were conferred additional powers as to roads, drains, lighting, cleansing, watering, and so forth, many of which had till then been discharged by different bodies of committees, commissioners, and trustees.

The vestries and district boards, however, although an improvement on the pre-existing form of government, did not command popularity or enthusiasm. A general tone of apathy pervaded them. The key to it undoubtedly lay in their *personnel*. They offered no attractions to ambition, and their membership conferred no social status. As a result, they drifted for the most part into the hands of small local tradesmen and of those who had some private axe to grind.

A royal commission was appointed in 1893, over which Mr. Leonard Courtney, M.P., presided, to inquire into the feasibility of amalgamating the city with the rest of London. The committee reported, among other things, that both the evidence before them and *à priori* considerations from the historical development of London led to the conclusion that the government of the metropolis should be intrusted to a general body and to a number of local authorities exercising certain other functions within the local areas which collectively make up London, the central bodies and the local bodies deriving their authority by direct election, and the functions assigned to each being so determined as to secure complete independence and responsibility for each member of the system. They strongly recommended bringing London into line with the other towns of the Kingdom by applying to it as far as possible the pro-

visions of the Municipal Corporations Acts. London, however, they admitted, was too large to be made into one town; it was, in fact, a collection of towns, and as such its local affairs needed to be governed by different municipal authorities. They recommended a certain adjustment of boundaries, and that the vestries should at once be styled councils and be invested with the privilege of choosing a mayor. Parliament took no action on the main recommendation, which was the establishment of a local authority for the city, but adopted that which concerned the rest of London. In 1899 the government introduced a measure entitled the London Government Bill. The Progressive party in London generally were opposed to it, and Mr. Herbert Gladstone moved its rejection in the House of Commons, but it was carried by a considerable majority in both Houses, and came into operation on the 9th of November, 1900. In obedience to the report of the Commission, the vestries and local boards were done away with and were superseded by borough councils possessing the form and clothed with a good many of the powers of a municipality. Seventy-eight elected vestries, consisting of more than four thousand members, were abolished by the act, twelve district boards of nearly six hundred members, one local board, and one urban district council. The parish was allowed to remain as a unit for rating purposes, and ecclesiastical matters were again restored to the hands of the inhabitants from whom the Metropolis Management Amendment Act, 1856, had transferred them to the elective vestry. But the local unit for all important purposes became the borough. The administrative county of London outside the city was divided into twenty-eight boroughs, sixteen of which were coterminous with single parishes. As a counterpoise, possibly, to the prominence of the city, the area of Westminster was given the title of the City of Westminster. The governing body in each case was to be the Borough Council, consisting of a mayor, aldermen, and councillors. The total number of councillors in each borough was not to exceed sixty, and the aldermen were to be one-sixth of the number of councillors, making a possible maximum total of seventy-one. This reduction of size was an undoubted improvement, some of the vestries having had as many as one hundred and twenty members. The determination of the boundaries of the boroughs and the wards into which they were divided for the purposes of election, the fixing of the precise numbers of the council, and other details

were delegated to be worked out by orders in council and by schemes and orders settled by the Local Government Board; but it was directed that in fixing the membership of the different councils and their wards, regard should be had to ratable value as well as to population. The franchise was declared to be the same as that introduced by the Local Government Act, 1894. The qualifications for a vote thereunder arise from occupation, possessing property in the district, being a lodger, or by service. Women are entitled to the franchise, but married women cannot exercise it in virtue of the same property as that under which their husbands become entitled. Women, however, are not eligible to serve as mayors, aldermen, or councillors, and in this respect the act was retrogressive, for women could be, and were in fact, members of the old vestries. It is a small concession that they may be co-opted on the library committee of a borough.

The qualifications for a councillor are that he should be a parochial elector for the borough or that he should have resided therein during the whole of the twelve months preceding the election. Councillors hold office for three years and are then capable of re-election. The option which the act gave of holding triennial instead of annual elections has been exercised, and there is consequently a general retirement at the end of every three years. The first election was held on the 1st of November, 1900, when (the election being largely influenced by feelings with regard to the Transvaal war) a large conservative majority was returned. The aldermen are elected by the councillors from themselves or from persons qualified to be councillors. They are elected triennially on the 9th of November for a term of six years, so that half of them retire every three years. The mayor is elected by the Council on the same day for the term of one year from among the aldermen and councillors or persons qualified to serve as such. He is *ex officio* a justice of the peace for London, and may receive such remuneration as the council thinks desirable. The vicar and churchwardens are no longer entitled to seats by virtue of their office, the act at length divorcing the long-standing union of ecclesiastical with municipal administration. Yet it is remarkable that at the recent elections two clergymen were chosen as mayors,—namely, in Marylebone and in Woolwich, in the latter of which the mayor represents the interests of the labor party.

To the new borough councils were transferred the powers, duties, properties, and liabilities of the vestries and district boards. They were also made the body for the carrying out of certain adoptive acts which had been passed from time to time, relating to public baths and wash-houses, libraries, burials, and other matters. They were empowered to make by-laws for the good rule of the borough and the suppression of nuisances therein. A much-needed right was given them in permitting them to promote bills in Parliament and to pay the costs of doing so out of the rates. The vestries had only the power of opposing bills, but not of promoting them.

In addition, certain powers of no great importance were transferred to the borough councils which had previously been vested in the London County Council, with reference to the licensing of wooden structures, the removal of obstructions in the streets, and the maintenance of main roads. The power and duty of repairing these and the expense incident thereto were made to fall on the borough councils without any liability on the County Council to contribute to their maintenance. The exercise of some powers was given to the borough concurrently with the County Council, as in the case of the demolition of buildings erected in contravention of the London Building Act and the execution of works under the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890. An enactment of some importance is that contained in section 5, (3) and (4), under which the Local Government Board are empowered, on the application of the London County Council and of the majority of the borough councils, to make a provisional order for transferring to all the borough councils any power exercised by the County Council, or *vice versa*. A similar provision is included with regard to the Common Council of the city of London. Considerable latitude is thus given for a future redistribution of the powers of local government. A provisional order, it may be explained, has, if it is passed, all the effect of an act of Parliament without entailing the long process and heavy expense incident to the obtaining of a special act. It is a measure sanctioned by a government department and by it embodied, often with other measures of a similar character, into an act, which becomes law automatically after being laid before the notice of Parliament for a certain time; while, if it is objected to by any member, it is then treated as an ordinary opposed private bill, and goes before

a select committee, which hears the parties and their counsel and witnesses and conducts its proceedings after the manner of a judicial tribunal.

A simplification of great service to the rate-payer is the provision in the act that all separate rates collected in any metropolitan borough shall for the future be levied together on one demand note. Where the borough comprises more than one parish, its expenses are to be divided between the parishes in proportion to their ratable value. The separate office of overseers is abolished and the borough council is to discharge their functions, excepting only those of registration and the preparation of jury lists, which matters are cast upon the town clerk, presumably with a view to introducing a direct personal responsibility for these duties.

Part of the system of checking financial expenditure which was imposed upon the County Council has been applied to the metropolitan boroughs. The accounts of the borough council and the borough treasurer have to be made up to the 31st of March in each year and are audited by the district auditors of the Local Government Board. This salutary check presents a favorable contrast with the system in force in the provincial boroughs, where the auditor is elected by the council itself and where the municipality is therefore under no immediate criticism of its finance. The necessity for such control is particularly necessary when the governing body of the town embarks upon enterprises of a commercial and perhaps of a speculative nature, for it is easy to mislead the rate-payers as to the real prosperity of such an undertaking by making an insufficient allowance, or no allowance at all, for depreciation, or by setting off the loss on one enterprise against the profit made on an entirely different one. And the country generally has of late loudly voiced its demand that an independent control of the kind introduced into London should be extended to the rest of the Kingdom. Every metropolitan borough is, moreover, compelled to issue an annual report in the June of each year and to send it to the London County Council. As in the case of the latter body, a finance committee has to be appointed and no expenditure of more than fifty pounds can be incurred, save upon a resolution of the Council based upon an estimate of that committee; all payments require an order of the Council and the signature of three members of the committee as well as that of the town clerk.

With regard to the borrowing of capital, the same powers as were possessed by the vestries and district boards are given to the borough councils, but with this modification, that where the consent of the London County Council is required to the raising of a loan, and that body refuses to give it, the borough may appeal to a body less likely to be influenced by narrow views or local prejudice,—namely, the Local Government Board. The same body is allowed to confer the overriding power of compulsory purchase under the Lands Clauses Acts to a borough council which requires land for some legitimate purpose and cannot obtain it by agreement with the owner. On the other hand, the Local Government Board is given the right of preventing a council from parting with any of the land it already possesses.

Such being in outline the reforms introduced by the London Government Act, the question naturally arises: How far have they been successful? The time that has elapsed since the act has come into operation is not great, but the results that have shown themselves in that time are certainly disappointing. The same work is, in fact, being done in the same way by the same men under a different name. The attempt of the government to put new life into the vestries by calling them borough councils unconsciously suggests the superstition prevalent among some tribes of changing a child's name when it is dangerously ill, so that the spirit of Death may be misled as to its identity. For if it was hoped that the dignity attaching to the titles of mayor, alderman, and councillor would attract men of higher ability to devote themselves to municipal work, the expectation has not been fulfilled. With the exception perhaps of Westminster and Kensington (in the former of which the Duke of Norfolk was the first mayor and the Marquis of Salisbury is the present holder of that office), practically the same men form the council as made up the vestry. The act appears, indeed, to have made greater changes of theory than of practice. The simplification of rate-collecting, the system of audit, and the co-ordination of the powers of the borough with those of the County Council are no doubt salutary innovations, but the fact remains that the chief result which the average Londoner sees of the new act is the framed name-plates at each street-corner with the name of the borough almost as conspicuous as that of the street. What appeals to him most is the reduction of his rates, and since the act these have gone

up by leaps and bounds, with a corresponding increase in the amount of local indebtedness.

In the borough of Marylebone matters have almost reached a crisis, owing to the rashness of the council in embarking upon a large scheme of electric lighting without properly examining into the cost which it would entail upon them. They gave notice to the Metropolitan Electric Supply Company, who distribute electric light and power over a considerable area of London, of their intention to buy out their undertaking within the borough under the Electric Lighting Acts. An arbitration was accordingly held, and the arbitrator awarded the sum of £1,212,000 in February of last year. This, however, does not represent the whole of the amount which the council will be called upon to expend; for with the costs of the arbitration, an allowance for capital expended by the company since 1901, interest on the purchase money until payment, and the extension of generating stations which is essential, the total cost cannot well fall short of £2,000,000. The purchase price was due on the last day of the old year, and the company has obtained an order to enforce the award. The council, being without funds to meet it, applied to the High Court for an extension of time until June 30, 1904. Mr. Justice Buckley, however, would only consent to extend it till the end of February. The London County Council have refused to make an advance, and the Government Departments will not come to the aid of the borough. The council, under pressure from the rate-payers, have attempted to get the company to agree to a modification of the award, but the only terms which the latter have consented to take are virtually prohibitive. The proposal is that the company shall accept a charge upon the rates and revenues for the borough and interest at an agreed rate upon the sum awarded by the arbitrator, and that the council shall redeem the whole amount at par in forty-two years. Meanwhile, the council is to lease the undertaking to the company from 1905 till 1931 at a rental equal to the interest on the stock. No competition is to be allowed in that time on the part of any other company; and, in addition, at the termination of the lease, the council is to purchase part of the generating station at Willesden. It is not surprising to learn that the reading out of these suggested terms by the mayor was greeted in the council with laughter. But that body is left with no alternative save to proceed with the bill which it has introduced into Parliament allowing it to raise the sum of £1,800,000, and which can alone

extricate it from this *impasse*. Yet it must be remembered that a meeting of the rate-payers will first have to be held, for, under the standing orders of both Houses, their consent is a condition precedent to the passing of the bill, and the rate-payers' committee is at the present moment issuing a circular recommending the rate-payers to refuse it. Moreover, it is always possible that Parliament may decline to interfere to save the borough from the consequences of its ill-advised experiment. To raise the amount by a rate would, it is estimated, require a rate of 15*d.* in the pound, in addition to the existing rates, the very possibility of which has filled the householders of Marylebone with horror and dismay.

There are two measures recently passed which are of considerable importance to the inhabitants of the Metropolis and which may be briefly referred to. These are the London Water Act, 1902, and the Education Act of last year. The problem of the water-supply for the area of London—or “Water-London,” as this district is commonly called—is an old one, and has been under constant discussion for the last fifty years. Water has now for many years been supplied to the town by eight companies created under various acts of Parliament. To some extent their areas of supply overlap, and competition thus existed at one time between them; but to save one another's pockets the companies came to mutual understanding by which they made a voluntary delimitation of their areas where these conflicted. To protect the consumer, therefore, Parliament, by the Water-Works Clauses Act of 1847, limited their profits to a cumulative dividend of 10 per cent., and after providing for a reserve fund, the balance is made to go in reduction of the water-rate. The bulk of London's water comes from the Thames and the reservoirs constructed along it; a smaller quantity is obtained from the river Lee and from wells sunk in the chalk. Two questions have accordingly arisen: first, whether the water companies could be safely and conveniently left with the monopoly of the most essential of all commodities; and, if not, to whom the management should be given; and, secondly, whether the existing sources of supply were likely to be sufficient for the near future. As regards the second of these questions, a royal commission appointed in 1893 and presided over by Lord Balfour, of Burleigh, and Lord Llandaff's Commission, which sat from 1897 to 1899, both reported that the present sources were sufficient for at least another fifty years. Nothing accordingly came of the London

County Council's scheme to obtain water from Wales by constructing a long line of aqueducts thence to London. Lord Llandaff's commission was also intrusted with an inquiry as to the desirability of the purchase and management of the water concerns by a public body. The commission, after sitting for two years and hearing an immense quantity of advice offered by the different parties interested, issued their report in a volume of considerable size. They advised that the undertaking of the companies should be acquired, but that the body to take them over should not be the London County Council, but a water board consisting of not more than thirty members chosen for their business capacity and, if possible, for their knowledge of matters connected with water-supply, ten being appointed by the London County Council and nearly all the others by the other county councils within whose districts water-London lies. The vestries were not to be represented. In 1900, however, when the government introduced their bill, the London Government Act was already law, and they resolved, in the face and in spite of this report, to give a preponderating influence to the borough councils at the expense of the London County Council. The joint select committee of both Houses before whom the bill was referred was presided over by Lord Balfour, of Burleigh, and decided against the inclusion of separate representatives from the boroughs. The government, however, brought pressure to bear upon it by threatening in that case to withdraw the bill altogether. As a result, a board was constituted consisting of a chairman, vice-chairman, and sixty-six members, of which the London County Council are to choose fourteen, and the borough councils one each, with the exception of the city of London and the city of Westminster, which are to choose two apiece. Representatives were also allotted to the other county councils, the Thames and Lee Conservancies, and other authorities. This miniature parliament is to come into being on June 24, 1904, and is to hold office for three years at a time. It is to take over and administer the undertakings of the companies within the London area. The determination of the purchase price was left to a specially constituted court of arbitration consisting of three well-known gentlemen, Sir Edward Fry (formerly Lord Justice Fry), Sir Hugh Owen, late permanent secretary of the Local Government Board, and Sir John Wolfe Barry, one of the foremost of modern engineers. Questions of law arising in the course of the arbitration are to go direct to the Court of Appeal, and thence (by leave) to the

House of Lords. No allowance was to be made for compulsory sale or for the enhancement or depreciation of market-values, owing to the passing or the anticipation of the passing of the act. The sum to be paid may (if so agreed) be discharged by the issue of water-stock. The size of the undertakings thus to be acquired may be gauged by the claim of one company alone (the New River Company), which demanded £15,000,000; this sum, however, will in all probability be considerably abated, owing to the decision of the arbitrators that the 10 per cent. limit on dividend applies to this company in common with the others, a matter which till now a congeries of acts of Parliament has involved in the greatest doubt. The East London Water Company claimed £6,500,000, and was awarded either £3,900,000 or £4,300,000, according to the view which the court should take of another legal question involved with regard to a sinking fund, known as the Chamberlain's Fund. Two other companies, the Grand Junction Water Company and the West Middlesex Water Company, have been awarded sums of approximately £3,500,000 each. The responsibility of the control of this large concern will be in proportion to its size, for the welfare of London must be largely dependent upon its obtaining a sufficient supply of wholesome water at a reasonable price. It is to be hoped that the general apprehension may not be realized, that the new authority may have its efficiency and energy impeded by its somewhat cumbersome size.

The Education Act of 1903 is the complement of the measure of the preceding year, and extends with some modifications to London the system then introduced into the rest of the Kingdom. The principle of both acts is the taking over by the local authority of the primary schools both the voluntary, or "non-provided schools," and the board schools, or "provided schools." The former are schools in which the religious teaching of some particular denomination is taught (whether it be that of the Church of England or that of Roman Catholics, Non-Conformists, or Jews), and which are supported by an association of that denomination and receive aid out of government grants. They are opposed to the board schools, or "provided schools," in which, under a section of the Elementary Education Act of 1870, known as the Cowper-Temple clause, no denominational religious teaching is given, and which are supported entirely out of the rates. The cost of the up-keep of the voluntary schools which are taken over under the act is now also to fall mainly on the rates, the general expense of teaching and maintenance being

borne by the local authority, whilst the denominational body pay for structural repairs, or what in a repairing lease is generally included under "landlord's repairs." The "provided" schools will continue to be kept up by the rates, but the school board will be abolished and will be succeeded by the local authority. The reason for treating London separately was the difficulty and importance of determining what the local authority should be. The prominence of the educational question in London may be realized from the fact that the expiring London School Board has five hundred and fifty thousand scholars to look after and nearly fourteen thousand teachers to educate them, while there are no less than five hundred and sixteen voluntary schools with nearly one hundred and eighty thousand scholars. As at first drawn, the bill of 1903 divided the control between the borough councils and the London County Council, but the strong opposition with which this proposal was received induced the government to constitute the London County Council the authority, at the same time allowing the borough councils a voice in the arrangement of "provided" schools. As the local education authority, the London County Council will have some general control over both "provided" and voluntary schools, and will have to raise the necessary rates. It will have to act, however, in all except financial matters through an education committee. This body is to consist of members of the Council, in addition to whom the act allows of the co-operation of persons possessing experience in education and acquainted with the various kinds of schools; and women, or at least one woman, will have to be on each committee. In the case of the first committee chosen, regard is to be had to the inclusion of members of the outgoing school board. It is important that the Progressive party, who command a majority in the Council, should already have avowed, through their leader, Mr. T. McKinnon Wood, their intention of refraining from co-option and, so far as the act does not force them to do otherwise, of including nobody except their own members on the Education Committee. It is to be hoped, however, that this attempt to override the spirit of the act will be defeated by the Board of Education, which is intrusted with the duty of sanctioning the final constitution of the Educational Committee. As Mr. Wood himself says, the main object should be to obtain a body which shall administer the act, free from sectarian bias and partiality, in the public interest and in the interests of education and the children.

The detailed administration of the school will devolve upon a body of managers. In the case of "provided" schools, they will be chosen as to two-thirds by the borough council and as to one-third by the London County Council. In the case of voluntary schools, two-thirds will be foundation managers representing the denominational body to which the school belongs and one-third will be appointed by the London County Council. Women are to be included as managers in the proportion of not less than a third. The act is to come into force on the 1st of May, 1904, or at a date within twelve months thereof, to be fixed by the Board of Education. Like the act of 1902, the measure is unpopular with a considerable class, who see in it the endowment of Church of England schools out of the rates, and regard it as a symptom of ecclesiastical tyranny; they have threatened to adopt with regard to it the policy of passive resistance to the payment of the education rate, which has been the manifestation of this displeasure over the rest of England. Yet the body of thinking Londoners do not, on the whole, appear to regard the principles of the act with disfavor. The control of a central body is calculated to create greater educational uniformity and efficiency throughout the London schools. The cost of denominational teaching in any particular school will fall on the denomination which supports it, while (as is only just) the cost of secular education will fall upon the rate-payers. They will have to pay more in the form of rates, but it will be taxation with representation.

In these pages I have attempted to give a bare outline of the recent changes in the municipal government of our greatest city. The intricacy and difficulty with which I premised that the subject was enveloped have, I fear, been made only too manifest. Nevertheless, this much, I think, will be clear: that Parliament has awakened to the need that exists for improvement and simplification, and that it has done not a little in this direction. And if all its measures have not been as successful as might have been wished, this result is due less, perhaps, to the measures themselves than to the men who have been chosen to execute them; for in this connection, too, the old maxim holds good, that it is the men who make the city.

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